



HAMPSTEAD
NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Appendix 2
Character Areas

(Draft) Hampstead
Neighbourhood Plan

2017-2032

Character Area A: The Historic Village

Hampstead has evolved over the centuries, resulting in an informal yet magnificent composition of streets, alleys, and courts, framed by buildings of many styles and types: simple and grand, small and large, historic and modern. Despite its diversity of scale and architectural style, the strength of the landscape and intimate street network unifies the area and gives it its essential character.

Hampstead High and Heath Streets are the main arterial routes in the area, still lined by narrow three and four storey historic buildings. Roof profiles and party walls that step with the steep slope distinguish the streetscape. The Conservation Area also has a number of listed buildings and prominent visual landmarks such as the Clock Tower, the Tube station and fine churches.



Narrow alleys, mews, and courtyards branch out from the main street to form enclosures of mixed-use areas that support the town centre. Perrins Lane, Oriel Place, and Old Brewery Mews are some examples. Small office uses above retail make a positive contribution to the activity through the day and the viability of the area.



Perrins Court



Alley: New End to Elm Row



Gated Entry off New End

Clusters of small buildings (such as the cottages of Mansfield Place and small converted warehouses of Back Lane) create pockets of quirky charm and individuality; the area feels compact and urban. Picturesque and intimate pedestrian alleys generate surprise and delight; buildings are often set back behind railings or brick boundary walls, which frame and reinforce a dense and public network of routes and spaces. Gated developments (such as the former New End Hospital) stand out as an anomaly in this landscape, undermining the network of clear and inviting public routes through their overt message of private security.



Well Walk



Oriel Place

Victorian era improvements, such as the widening and landscaping of the Heath and High Streets and Well Walk respect and reinforce the hierarchy of public routes. Street trees tend to be mature and make a magnificent contribution to the street scene. Within the dense core, trees often occur singly or in small clusters and where they do, are memorable interventions in the dense built character of the village core. Single trees, such as at Oriel Place or New Court, are important public focal points.



Burgh House



Well House



Flask Walk

Grand houses and buildings sit comfortably in this landscape, offering an intimate front to the narrow streets while sitting discreetly behind landscaped setbacks, iron railings and walls. Despite the variation in scale, the predominance of brick as a building material in the area creates harmony.

The area also has local authority housing estates, which are well integrated into the area; some date back to the 19th century, others were built after WWII. They benefit from being

set within a now mature landscape and do not intrude onto the street. There is no or very little car parking on site.

Views over rooftops of trees, historic towers, church spires, and landmark buildings are a feature of the topography, making it critical to preserve the integrity of long views. Roof level interventions, such as loft conversions, can add to the variety if designed well or result in large front dormers destroying the scale of the street and need careful consideration. New elements in the skyline or raising the roof profile are often disruptive to the sense of uniformity of the skyline.



**Former New End Hospital Chimney (above)
Natwest Bank skyline (below)**

Character Area B: The Outer Village



Grade I listed Fenton House



Former Mount Vernon Hospital

Stretching north around the dense village core is the outer village - an area of imposing houses and buildings in a magnificent setting of large mature walled gardens, compounds, green verges, and numerous fine trees. The lush landscape character of the area signals the presence of Hampstead Heath nearby.

The area is home to Fenton House, the oldest surviving mansion in Hampstead. Close by is Mount Vernon, a former 1880s hospital by Roger Smith now apartments, which gives an unusual formality to the area. The topography in the area is pronounced, with streets and stepped alleys framing many picturesque views, both urban and green.



Lower Terrace

There are a few formal terraces of houses in the area; Cannon Place offers paired villas creating a consistent and more urban ensemble along the street. While some cottages and terraces relate directly to the street, many buildings are set behind walls. Doorways and gates into walls are typical features.



Cannon Place



Windmill Hill

Some high quality modern detached houses exist in the area, with some from the 1970s and 1980s now being replaced. New additions of similar scale that fit within the landscape are successful, but recent precedents of larger scaled proposals threaten the character of the area. In some areas, newer houses dominate the setting and appear to be crammed onto sites that are too small for them; these are inappropriate additions in an area where buildings, although often large, rarely overwhelm their landscape setting.

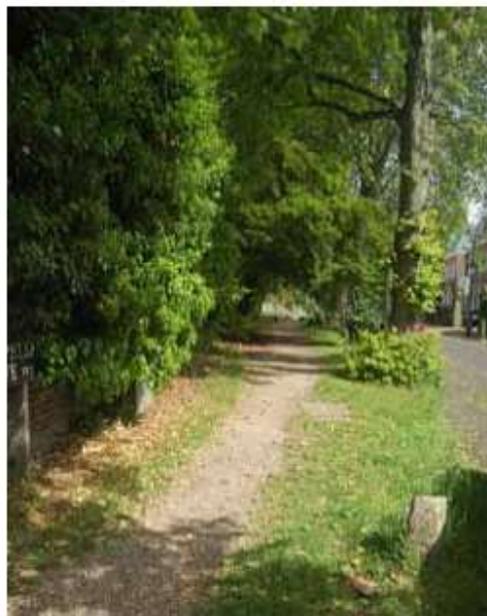


Left – example of appropriate and well integrated new development; right - example of overwhelming development

Pedestrian routes through stepped alleys and informal pavements are prominent. Routes leading up to the Heath are important habitat and green corridors. By virtue of its location, the outer village plays an important role in preserving and enhancing the integrity of the Hampstead Heath fringe.



Holly Mount Steps



Lower Terrace

There are a number of mature and beautiful trees in the area. They are planted on streets and verges and also within private gardens and walled compounds, which are visible in and contribute to the public realm. They often occur singly but also in clusters and create a spectacular setting that changes with the seasons.



Character Area C: 19th Century Expansion

The Victorian suburban neighbourhoods developed on the original estates and landholdings south and east of the village core and can be clearly distinguished by their planned appearance and typical urban streets framed by rows of houses. A number of development types can be found in this wider area from dense terraced streets (e.g Willoughby Road) to rows of semi-detached or paired terraces (e.g Hampstead Hill Gardens) to detached houses (e.g Frognaal, Keats Grove).



Denning Road

The streets around Willoughby Road and South Hill Park / Parliament Hill typically feature terraced housing with a direct relationship to the street. While building styles vary, a common palette of brick and stucco and rooflines that rise and fall with the topography preserve the integrity of the street.



Pilgrims Lane and Willoughby Road

The transition from the public pavement to the private home through a semi private space is a notable feature of these Victorian terraced streets. A typical ground level includes a boundary of railings or low brick parapet enclosing a planted space. New houses that disregard this principle disrupt the quality and character of the street.

On Frognal, a plot-by-plot development, often architect designed, has resulted in greater individuality in building character although the direct relationship to the street is maintained. Later additions that do not conform to the prevailing approach detract from the pedestrian quality of the street despite interesting architecture.



Houses on Frognal



Downshire Hill is characterised by a range of building types including large white stucco detached houses and some modern insertions; Keats Grove and South End Road are smaller in scale with generous front gardens. The Hopkins House by Michael and Patricia Hopkins, 44 Willoughby Road by Guard Tillman Pollack Architects and 1-3 Willow Road by Erno Goldfinger are modern houses of modest scale and high design quality that fit well into the neighbourhood because they are unique and modest in scale. Other new developments such as the house at the junction of the High Street and Willoughby Road are unsuccessful despite the intention to 'replicate' the street form.

Add photo of detached historic houses



Hopkins House, Downshire Hill



Grade I listed 1-3 Willow Road

Heath Street turns into Fitzjohn's Avenue, which runs down the slope to Swiss Cottage and Finchley Road. To the south of Fitzjohn's are the streets of Ellerdale, Prince Arthur Road and Arkwright Road. Thurlow Road and Lyndhurst Terrace form the boundary of the Forum area and are similar in character with often large villas, many now flats mostly with car parking at the front. The streets contain large mature trees as do the private gardens.

At the top of Arkwright Road and Fitzjohn's schools dominate the area. The roads in the area are too often blocked with school run traffic leading to high levels of pollution. The UCS Senior School campus that borders the Neighbourhood Area in Arkwright Road compounds this situation. **Can we find a school run traffic photo?**

Between the High Street, Prince Arthur Road and Fitzjohn's Avenue is an area containing some larger buildings. Henderson Court and opposite it the Arthur West House (under construction) together with Greenhill are anomalies and unlike the character of the rest of the area. The area is also characterised by the schools of Saint Anthony's Preparatory School, Fitzjohn's Primary School and Northbridge House Senior School. Another large site exists in the Royal Mail Delivery Office of Shepherd's Walk and Spring Walk. Any redevelopment of these sites must consider and enhance the scale and pedestrian quality of the wider area.

The shopping streets of South End Green were built in the late 1800s, though Pond Street has many listed buildings from an earlier time. While it is a popular destination, excessive traffic undermines its character. South End Green effectively serves the role of a traffic island. The brutalist architecture of the Royal Free Hospital is a looming presence. Deteriorating paving, poor signage, and clutter lead to poor quality pavements and impede movement, and there is an opportunity to improve the design of open spaces in the town centres.



South End Road in 1880s



Original shopfronts in South End Green as well as Hampstead High Street enliven the streetscape, as do some well-designed modern ones; those that present lifeless facades, advertising posters, or loud branded fronts are missed opportunities that make no positive contribution to the area.



Left: Traditional shopfronts enhance the period buildings

Right: Poor use of materials, colours and finishes detract from the streetscape

Character Area D: The Outlying Areas

The distinguishing feature of the pockets of development referred to as the outlying areas is their sense of being set within the Heath. They are essentially of two kinds: self-contained older areas enclosed by the Heath (Vale of Health, and North End); and large mansions and gardens or 20th century developments such as Mount Tyndall, St. Columba's and Firecrest Drive built in what were previously the estates of large houses (Branch Hill/Oak Hill Park, Heath House, Inverforth Lodge and the Elms).



Left: Back of houses in South Hill Park

Right: row of terraces houses in Vale of Health

The neighbourhoods of the Vale of Health and North End are similar in charm and mix of historical styles to the village core. Both are intimate in scale but distinctly urban pockets set within the Heath.

The gated nature and domineering scale (a term used by Pevsner!) of some of the 20th century developments detracts from the open aspect of the rest of the Forum area. Spedan Close, the development of Branch Hill Estate, by Benson and Forsyth for the Camden Architects Departments in the late 1970s is a highlight. The 21 pairs of two storey villas are a hidden modernist architecture delight in the Forum area.



Oak Hill Estate



Firecrest Drive

Overgrown greenery and mature landscape is typical of the areas surrounding the buildings and is an appropriate character for the fringes of the Heath. Any future redevelopment of the area must consider its location at the edge of the Heath and seek to preserve and enhance its lush open character.

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Character Area E: Hampstead Heath

The 790-acre Hampstead Heath, a unique relic of London's former countryside located on the Hampstead-Highgate ridge is the area's most spectacular feature and gives Hampstead its identity and character. The Heath is a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation and part of Kenwood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is owned and managed by the Corporation of London

While the Heath is a separate and distinct character area it is not specifically addressed in this Plan as it is subject to a range of protection and management guidelines by various agencies and overseen by the Heath and Hampstead Society. However the importance of the Heath to the quality and character of Hampstead's built areas cannot be underestimated and all new developments, particular along the fringes of the Heath or those that have a visual relationship with it should minimise any impact on it.



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